The cold case of JonBen ét Ramsey

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Background

Who: JonBenét Ramsey

What: Murdered by asphyxia

Where: Boulder, Colorado

When: December 26, 1996

Investigation Strategy

Investigative Interviews

- Obtain possible MO
- Description from possible eyewitness
- Family and family friends

Evidence Collection/Analysis

- Collection of the ransom note
- Weapons and the physical body
- DNA analysis/forensic evidence

Searching the home

- Cursory search
- Unsecure scene
- Delayed body discovery

Investigative errors and cognitive bias

Securing the scene

Very little preservation of crime scene/evidence

Movement of Body

Body moved from basement to 1st floor.

Treated as kidnapping

Scene treated as a strict kidnapping from the start

Lack of separation

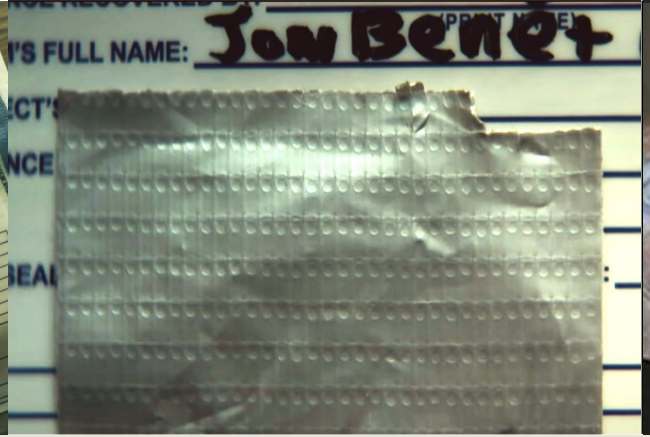
Failed to separate John and Patsey Ramsey to get a story

Tunnel Vision

Focused on the kidnapping theory.

Conformation Bias

Everyone looked through the lens that the family was guilty.

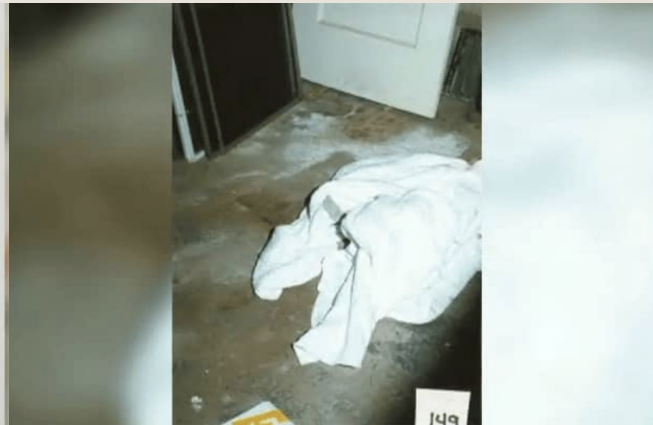


Evidence

Mr. Ramsey,

Listen carefully! We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign faction. We do respect your business but not the country that it serves. At this time we have your daughter in our possession. She is safe and unharmed and if you want her to see 1997, you must follow our instructions to the letter.

You will withdraw $118,000.00 from your account. $100,000 will be in $100 bills and the remaining $18,000 in $20 bills. Make sure that you bring an adequate size attache to the bank. When you get home you will put the money in a brown paper bag. I will call you between 8 and 10 am tomorrow to instruct you on delivery. The delivery will be exhausting so I advise you to be rested. If we monitor you getting the money early, we might call you early to arrange an earlier delivery of the money and hence a earlier pick-up of your daughter. Any deviation of my instructions will result in the immediate execution of your daughter. You will also be denied her remains for proper burial. The two gentlemen watching over your daughter do not like you so I advise you not to provoke them. Speaking to anyone about your situation, such as Police, F.B.I., etc., will result in your daughter being beheaded. If we catch you talking to a stray dog, she dies. If you alert bank authorities, she dies. If the money is in any way marked or tampered with, she dies. You will be scanned for electronic devices and if any are found, she dies. You can try to deceive us but be warned that we are familiar with Law enforcement countermeasures and tactics. You stand a 99% chance of killing your daughter if you try to out smart us. Follow our instructions



Blind leads and dead ends

John Mark Karr

- False confession
- Called her death an accident
- DNA did not match

Early over focus on the Ramsey family

- Intra-familial theory
- Suspicion around ransom note
- DNA did not match

Unidentified Male DNA match

- Found in 2003 7 years after original findings
- Found on Jonbenet's underwear and long johns
- Remains unidentified

Legal and Moral Issues

Interrogation

- Were not interviewed formally for months
- Never took polygraph tests

Chain of Custody

- Failed to secure the scene
- Movement of the body
- Movement of evidence

Child sensationalism

- Child exploitation
- Serious crime turned into public spectacle
- Pageants could be an inappropriate environment for a child

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